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Some Notes on Illinois Authors

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When I was in the seventh and eighth grades, I attended a one-room rural school in southern Illinois. I still remember some of the pictures that hung at the front of the room. Many of them were pictures of authors. I remember the kindly look of Oliver Wendell Holmes, but I remember more clearly his sidewhiskers extending an inch or two lower than the point of his chin. I remember the piercing stare of the bearded Walt Whitman, the mild eyes of the bearded John Greenleaf Whittier, and the aristocratic forehead of the bearded Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. I used to marvel at the huge inverted U of the moustache of James Russell Lowell, and I wondered how he could comb that moustache so that it didn't tangle with his handsome beard. But particularly I was impressed by the bearded William Cullen Bryant. The top of his head was almost bald, but the white hair on the back of his head and neck swept far down the back of his coat, reminding me of the pictures of Niagara Falls that I saw on boxes of Shredded Wheat. White sideburns and sidewhiskers likewise plunged downward, and his right ear looked like a small boulder around which the current broke before it continued its precipitous way. His mouth was hidden completely between moustache and beard, and I sometimes wondered how he could find it when he was eating. Not all of Bryant's beard showed in the picture, but what was there was magnificent, dwarfing even the Niagara at the back of his neck. I imagined that the beard reached to his knees, and I was awed much more by his hirsute adornments than I was by the fact that he had written a poem about a waterfowl.

Several years ago this article was presented as a talk at an I. A. T. E. luncheon. In response to continued requests for copies, it is printed here for the first time.

Beneath each of these portraits was some thrilling information, usually something like this: James Russell Lowell, b. Cambridge, Mass., 1819; d. Cambridge, Mass., 1891. Sometimes, for the sake of variety, the inscription would read: b. Portland, Maine, 1807; d. Cambridge, Mass., 1882 or b. Cummington, Mass., 1794; d. New York City, 1878.

In high school one of my important discoveries was that not all authors were bearded. True, Sidney Lanier's picture was on a wall there, Sidney Lanier with his stiff black beard. And an Englishman named Tennyson was pictured there with a ragged beard, and another Englishman named Shakespeare had a short moustache and a short dark beard. But, I discovered, Edgar Allan Poe was an author, and he had only a moustache. So had Nathaniel Hawthorne. Ralph Waldo Emerson had only some short, neatly trimmed sidewhiskers. And strangely enough, two authors, Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg, had neither beards, moustaches, nor sidewhiskers. Even more strangely, they were alive! Strangest of all, Carl Sandburg had been born in Illinois, and had spent most of his life in this state.

You see, without putting the thoughts into words, I had formed three half-impressions of authors. The first was that they all had long hair on their faces. The second was that they were all dead. The third was that most of them were associated in some way with Massachusetts; if they weren't from Massachusetts, they were almost certainly from England.

My faulty impressions received a measure of correction when, as a high-school junior, I heard Vachel Lindsay chant some of his poetry. Lindsay had no beard, he was unquestionably alive, and he was not from Massachusetts. In fact, he was from Springfield, Illinois. I could, and did, walk on some of the same streets that Vachel Lindsay walked on. I was greatly impressed by Mr. Lindsay. I remember still his expressive hands, his huge head thrown back as, completely without inhibitions, he shouted his poetry, murmured his poetry, lived his poetry. The textbook that we used contained only one of Lindsay's poems, "The Congo," but I had been sufficiently impressed by my first sight of a real live author that I checked from the library a book of his poems and read the poems that he had recited for us, "General William Booth Enters into Heaven," "The Ghosts of the Buffaloes," "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight," and "The Santa Fe Trail," as well as other poems that he had not included. Two or three years later, when Vachel Lindsay committed suicide, I felt almost as if I had suffered a personal loss.

So much for autobiography, except that I feel compelled to draw a moral. A prophet is without honor in his own country. An expert has been defined as someone who lives a long distance away. I have sometimes wondered whether we teachers do not often unintentionally leave with our students the impression that literary experts, or authors, are people from a long distance away—in space, in time, or in personal characteristics. Do we talk often enough of authors as human beings? Do we in Illinois emphasize that there are authors at work right this minute—in Illinois? Do we let our students know that most schools in Illinois have graduated young people who later have had writings published somewhere? Perhaps most of these authors did not gain wide renown, but authors they were nevertheless. The English Club of Greater Chicago has prepared a list of graduates of Chicago high schools who have made a success in some phase of communication. It contains over a hundred names of very well known or reasonably well known writers graduated from Chicago schools in the past twenty or thirty years.

Do we let our students know that at least a score of Illinois authors are well known not only nationally but also internationally, and that some of their writings have been translated into dozens of languages? Or do we mistakenly concentrate our attention chiefly on a few bearded authors from Massachusetts or England? Further, do we mistakenly place each author upon a pedestal, equip him with a little halo, imply that he is a creature not like other human beings, a superman, a man apart from the physical and mental and emotional experiences that the rest of us have? Do we say in effect, "Authors aren't like you—or even like me. They are a higher race of beings who dwell apart from the common herd. They think magnificent thoughts, and under the guidance of their splendid inspiration, they put their thoughts on paper for us all to marvel at." If we say or imply anything like that, our run-of-the-mill students are not likely to learn to care very much about literature. Students are down to earth. They are seldom interested in magnificent thoughts that are only to be marveled at. But they are interested in human beings. And they can be led from an interest in human beings to an interest in the literature that those human beings have created.

As an illustration, I have often thought that an Illinois author, Don Marquis, has written something that does more to present William Shakespeare as a human being than anyone else I know. If you look on your map of Illinois authors, up toward the northwestern corner of the state, at the little town of Walnut, you will

see a picture of a little bug jumping up and down on the keys of a typewriter. The little bug is archy, the literary cockroach. archy types his own manuscripts, and since he cannot shift gears for capital letters, there are no capitals in his accounts of his adventures. In all good humorous writing there are undercurrents of seriousness, and archy, or Don Marquis, was a good humorous writer, satirizing the foibles of his day. One of those foibles was, and is, excessive adulation of Shakespeare, who has been changed in the popular mind from a man to an unapproachable god. And if Shakespeare is unapproachable, then he will not be approached, or he will be approached with fear or repugnance, or both. archy had a parrot friend named pete, who had been just a young parrot in the sixteenth century, and who had heard bill shakespeare at the tavern, pete says,

boring his friends about what
he might have been and done
if only he had a fair break.

pete recounts some of bill shakespeare's conversations.

i might have been a poet (bill says)
if i had kept away from the theater . . .
say i wonder
if that boy heard you order
another bottle frankie
the only compensation is that i get
a chance now and then
to stick in a little poetry
when nobody is looking.

bill says that writing a play is easy. all that you have to do is put enough

murder in them what they want
is kings talking like kings
never had sense enough to talk
and stabbings and stranglings
and fat men making love
and clowns basting each
other with clubs and cheap puns.

then bill tells more about how he writes a play :

the manager hands me some mouldy old
manuscript and says

bill here s a plot for you
this is the third of the month
by the tenth i want a good
script out of this that we
can start rehearsals on
not too big a cast
and not too much of your
damned poetry either
you know your old
familiar line of hokum
they eat up that falstaff stuff
of yours ring him in again
and give them a good ghost
or two and remember we gotta
have something dick burbage can get
his teeth into and be sure
and stick in a speech
somewhere the queen will take
for a personal compliment . . .
but i don t need to tell
you bill you know this game
just some of your ordinary
hokum.

Exaggerated? Of course. But I believe that a high-school student will get a better understanding of Shakespeare and Shakespeare's methods from Don Marquis's lines than he will get from an hour's worth of telling that Shakespeare was the greatest writer of all time and that we should all feel humble in his presence. For Shakespeare was a man, and Don Marquis presents him as a man, and students will like and respect him as a man, but fear him or even hate him as a haloed figure on a pedestal.

This isn't a talk about Shakespeare. It's a talk about Illinois authors. But those authors, like Shakespeare, were and are human beings, too.

I want to share with you this afternoon some of the jottings concerning Illinois authors that I made when our committee was preparing the literary map of Illinois and the two issues of the *Bulletin* that give supplementary information. I want to suggest a number of things about Illinois authors that I believe your students should know. The comments that I shall make are merely illustrative of the hundreds of bits of information that will make authors, and literature itself, seem real to students. From your

own knowledge and reading you may supplement my comments extensively.

As you know, many students believe that authors are sissies. Many Illinois authors provide refutation of that idea. I need not remind you that Carl Sandburg was driver of a milk wagon, scene shifter, hobo, harvest hand, carpenter, house painter, soldier, janitor, and captain of his college basketball team. I need not remind you that Edgar Lee Masters was a successful lawyer before he became a successful poet. I need not remind you that John G. Neihardt lived for several years with Indians and was accepted as a member of the tribe. The early explorers—Radisson, Tonti, Membré, Marquette—were brave men, but they were also literate brave men who usually wrote informatively and well of the vast land that they were among the first white men to see.

I could name other Illinois authors who refute the theory that authors are sissies, but I shall choose as my particular example Lew Sarett. It is possible that your students use a speech textbook of which Sarett is a co-author. Perhaps they know of his work in the Department of Speech at Northwestern University. Probably they have read some of his poems in their anthologies. But some important things they may not know about Sarett. They may not know that his parents came to America from southeastern Europe, that his father was a day laborer, and that, as Sarett himself says of his parents, "They were simple foreigners with no background of wealth or family or culture." Your students may not know that Sarett learned to love the woods and mountains when he was still a young boy, but that at the age of twelve he worked as a bundle boy in Chicago's Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company, that he peddled papers, that he got his meals at the free-lunch counter of Hinky Dink's saloon at Van Buren and Clark, that he lived in a tenement. On hot nights this twelve- or thirteen-year-old boy would walk two miles to a pier that jutted out into Lake Michigan, where he would lie sleeping or listening to the water, looking at the stars, longing for woods and mountains. He says, "It was on those desperate hungry and lonely nights that the will to go back to the woods and the mountains was born, the will to give my whole life to the things that I knew best and loved most was born—to the wild earth." A few years later he worked as a forest ranger and as a guide to help pay his way through school. In 1912 Stuart Pratt Sherman gave the young man a job teaching English at the University of Illinois while Sarett studied in law school. And in that same year he wrote his first poem. He was twenty-four years old at the time. Here is his explanation of how it happened: "On

a moonlit October night in 1912, while I was grading a batch of English themes—a chore on that beautiful night—I heard a flock of wild geese gabbling overhead, flying south in the fall migration. I knocked off work, went out, looked into the moonlit sky, and listened to them talking together. I thought of the wild country to the north that they had come from, the country I knew and loved, and that I had just come from after a season of guiding. I thought of their wild freedom, their wild rebellious hearts, their hatred of restraint and confinement. Something in their bugle calls as they beat south in the moonlight stirred me deeply. I knew the wild heart of those birds. I knew their life. I belonged to them. I was so moved that I went into the house when they were gone, and I wrote a poem with the wild geese in it, their cries, their hunger, their wild hearts—and my own wild heart. That was my first poem. And I have been writing poetry steadily ever since.”

With background information like that, your students will better understand and better appreciate almost any of the poems of Sarett, for instance, his well-known “Four Little Foxes.”

Speak gently, Spring, and make no sudden sound ;
For in my windy valley, yesterday I found
New-born foxes squirming on the ground.
 Speak gently.

Walk softly, March, forbear the bitter blow ;
Her feet within a trap, her blood upon the snow,
The four little foxes saw their mother go—
 Walk softly.

Go lightly, Spring, oh give them no alarm ;
When I covered them with boughs to shelter them from harm,
The thin blue foxes suckled at my arm—
 Go lightly.

Step softly, March, with your rampant hurricane ;
Nuzzling one another, and whimpering with pain,
The new little foxes are shivering in the rain—
 Step softly.

Many Illinois authors have loved the land. Some of them say with Carl Sandburg,

O prairie mother, I am one of your boys.
I have loved the prairie as a man with a heart shot full of pain
 over love.

Here I know I will hearken after nothing so much as one more
sunrise or a sky moon of fire doubled to a river moon of
water.

Sandburg's prairie says,

I am here when the cities are gone.
I am here before the cities come.
I nourished the lonely men on horses.
I will keep the laughing men who ride iron.
I am dust of men.

The running water babbled to the deer, the cottontail, the
gopher.

You came in wagons, making streets and schools,
Kin of the ax and rifle, kin of the plow and horse,
Singing Yankee Doodle, Old Dan Tucker, Turkey in the Straw,
You in the coonskin cap at a log house door hearing a lone
wolf howl,

You at a sod house door reading the blizzards and chinooks let
loose from Medicine Hat,

I am dust of your dust, as I am brother and mother
To the copper faces, the worker in flint and clay,
The singing women and their sons a thousand years ago
Marching single file the timber and the plain.

Among the white pioneers that Sandburg refers to was John Bryant, brother of William Cullen Bryant, who came from Massachusetts to Jacksonville, Illinois, and then moved to Princeton, Illinois, where he lived for seventy years. John, in 1854, was instrumental in creating in Bureau County one of the first Republican organizations in the country, and for that reason is regarded as a founder of the Republican Party. Bryant's house was a station on the Underground Railroad, sometimes harboring fifteen fugitive slaves at once. In 1860 Bryant's hand was strong in the convention that nominated Abraham Lincoln. In 1866, at Princeton, Bryant helped to found the first high school in the state, under a special charter from the state legislature, and the success of that school led the legislature to pass a law in 1874 authorizing any township in the state to establish such schools. Like his brother William Cullen, John Bryant wrote poetry, although we must admit that it is poorer poetry, more filled with clichés. A few lines reminiscent of Whittier's "Snowbound" will give its flavor:

Our cabins, though uncouth and rude,
 Built of the forest trees unhewed,
 Were homes of comfort, snug and warm,
 That fenced away the driving storm;
 Where huddled in the winter time
 Our children, now in manhood's prime;
 And many a joyous winter night
 Was passed around the blazing light
 Of the big fire. And tales were told
 Of Indians, bears, and panthers bold,
 Till on each urchin's frowsy head
 The bristling hair stood up with dread.

Seventeen years younger than John Bryant, Lucy Larcom moved from Massachusetts in 1846, when she was 22. She lived in the vicinity of Alton, taught in the schools there, and assisted John Greenleaf Whittier in editing two anthologies of poetry. Like Whittier and like John Bryant, she devoted much of her energy to the abolition movement. She was the author of three books, one of which, a large volume called "Poems," was rather highly popular in the 1870's and 1880's. Her poems addressed to adults seem today impossibly stilted and dull, but her nature poetry for children has considerable zest and imagination. Here, for instance, is "Jack-in-the-Pulpit." Recall what you know about this early spring flower with the little man-shaped figure and the spathe arching above his head. Remember also that the poem was written for children.

Crackle! Crack! the ice is melting;
 From the west the rain falls pelting:
 Swish and gurgle, splash and spatter!
 "Halloo! good folks, what's the matter?
 Seems to me the roof is leaking!"
 Jack from down below is speaking.

You know little Jack? In the spring he is seen on the swampy
 edge
 Of the hemlock wood, looking out from the shade of the fern
 wreathed ledge:
 But in winter he cuddles close under a thatch of damp leaves.—
 Now the water is trickling fast in through his garret-eaves;
 And he opens his eyes, and up he starts, out of his cosy bed,
 And he carefully holds, while he climbs aloft, his umbrella
 over his head.

Many Illinois authors since Lucy Larcom's day have written appreciatively of the land. Not always is it Illinois land that they write about: the westward call has lured Illinois writers such as Mary Austin of Carlinville, Glenn Ward Drésbach of Lanark, John G. Neihardt of Sharpsburg near Taylorville, who was named poet laureate by the state legislature of Nebraska, and dear Mr. Clarence Mulford of Streator, who created Hopalong Cassidy back in 1910. Numerous Illinois authors have shared the feeling of Lew Sarett, who wrote, "No doubt some Americans, urban and sophisticated, regard these rural regions and folk as remote in time and in geography—and of no great consequence. . . . Others of us feel, however, that these regions and their earthy folk are of great moment: they represent a precious inheritance; the remnants of them are a vital part of the life of our country today; they give America much of her peculiar identity, color, and power; and they are in the blood of America. Indeed, some of us think that they are all that matters much—the wild earth, nature: the enduring mountains that look down imperturbably on the human race, on its troubles, its momentary triumphs, its passing vanities; the permanent, fecund earth which yields up its fruit century on century and sustains the brute and human life of the world."

Illinois authors generally write with less love of the small towns and cities than they do of the land. This is not a peculiarity of our authors; comparatively few writers in the entire country praise those places where more than a handful of houses are bunched. Why? I don't know. If I were teaching in high school again, I'd talk about that question with my students: Why don't many American authors write affectionately about towns and cities? One can think of English authors who have written lovingly of London and small English towns. One can think of authors from many nations who feel a warm love for Paris. But how many write caressing lines about New York or Cleveland or Chicago—or Littleville? I wish I knew why the number is so small.

Not that life in the small towns and cities is ignored. We think immediately of Edgar Lee Masters and his acid portraits of the people of Spoon River. One of the less well-known of these is the portrait of Mrs. Kessler, in which, it seems to me, all the other Spoon River people are epitomized. Mrs. Kessler is speaking.

Mr. Kessler, you know, was in the army,
And he drew six dollars a month as a pension,
And stood on the corner talking politics,
Or sat at home reading Grant's Memoirs;

And I supported the family by washing,
Learning the secrets of all the people
From their curtains, counterpanes, shirts, and skirts.
For things that are new grow old at length,
They're replaced with better or none at all:
People are prospering or falling back,
And rents and patches widen with time;
No thread or needle can pace decay,
And there are stains that baffle soap,
And there are colors that run in spite of you,
Blamed though you are for spoiling a dress.
Handkerchiefs, napery, have their secrets—
The laundress—Life—knows all about it.
And I, who went to all the funerals
Held in Spoon River, swear I never
Saw a dead face without thinking it looked
Like something washed and ironed.

Among other Illinois authors associated with small towns, a half dozen may be mentioned. Professor James Webber Linn has described Jane Addams's youth in Cedarville and Rockford as well as her many years in Chicago. Paul Angle's *Here I Have Lived* is an excellent picture of Springfield in its early years. About a third of Mary Austin's autobiography, *Earth Horizon*, concerns her years in Carlinville. Some of Floyd Dell's novels are set in part in small towns. Sarah Marshall of Shawneetown, who is believed to have been Illinois' first novelist, used her home community or a similar one for the "highly moral tales" that she called novels. Lois Montross, a graduate of the University of Illinois, and her husband wrote novels concerning college life in the Scott Fitzgerald days of the 1920's. Rockford's Alice Beal Parsons has written novels with settings in Illinois communities.

The city of Chicago, although seldom given unqualified praise by authors, has for about sixty years been a literary center of the United States. Perhaps you have noticed in our booklet of Illinois authors this quotation from H. L. Mencken, a writer to whom Illinois can lay no claim:

"In Chicago is the mysterious something that makes for individuality, personality, charm; in Chicago a spirit broods upon the face of the waters. Find a writer who is indubitably an American in every pulse beat, an American who has something new and peculiarly American to say and who says it in an unmistakably American way, and nine times out of ten you will find that he has

some sort of connection with the gargantuan abattoir by Lake Michigan—that he was bred there, or got his start there, or passed through there in the days when he was young and tender.”

Even though we water down Mencken's exuberance a little, we can see that Chicago has passed through two and possibly three golden ages of letters. In the 1890's Chicago was the home of a number of writers who were for the most part not natives of Illinois but who in their Chicago days were bringing respect to Midwestern writing. Among the giants of the '90's or the early 1900's who resided at least for a time in Chicago were novelist Theodore Dreiser, whose *Sister Carrie* and *An American Tragedy* were made into two good movies; Henry B. Fuller, who portrayed what he called the “cliffdwellers” or apartment-house dwellers of Chicago; George Ade, famous for his *Fables in Slang*, known as a humorist, although he said that he had never wanted to be a comic or tried to be one—the same George Ade who had trouble getting through Purdue University but was called back in 1926 and given an honorary L.H.D. degree; novelist Frank Norris, author of the famous stories of wheat farming and wheat selling; Hamlin Garland, who lived some time in Chicago and later came to love the Eagle's Nest art colony near Oregon, Illinois; novelist Robert Herrick; novelist Upton Sinclair, still writing prolifically fifty years later, made famous by *The Jungle*, a book about the Chicago stockyards, and a book partly responsible for the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act; poet Eugene Field, whose newspaper column “Sharps and Flats” was to gain him national renown for his sentimental poetry; novelists Frank Harris and Opie Read; poet William Vaughn Moody . . . the list is a long one.

In this listing of Chicago authors of the '90's, special mention should be given a now sadly neglected writer, Finley Peter Dunne. A young newspaperman of thirty, Dunne one day listened to a Dearborn Street saloonkeeper discussing the day's news. The saloonkeeper's name was James McGarry. Imitating McGarry's heavy Irish brogue, Dunne wrote for the Chicago *Times-Herald* an article called “The Thoughts of Colonel McNeery.” The article attracted so much attention for its quiet humor and penetrating observation that it was followed by others. When saloonkeeper McGarry objected that the name McNeery sounded suspiciously like his own, Dunne changed McNeery to Dooley, and thus the famous Mr. Dooley was born. His name became a household word throughout the English-speaking world, and for some years “Mr. Dooley says” was as popular as “Confucius say” a few decades later. Mr. Dooley may be called an Irish Will Rogers.

The English printed pirated editions of the Dooley books, paying Dunne no royalties until he made a special trip to England. In retribution, Dunne dedicated one of his books in this way: "To Sir George Newnes, Bart., Messrs. George Routledge and Sons Limited, and Other Publishers Who, Uninvited, Presented Mr. Dooley to a Part of the British Public." Today many of Mr. Dooley's comments seem hopelessly dated, but some of those reprinted in *Mr. Dooley at His Best* are still readable, still penetrating, still funny.

Chicago's role as a literary center was a trifle less important in the opening years of the twentieth century, but the beginning of its second Golden Age is usually placed in 1912. Whereas the first Golden Age was mainly one of prose, the second was mainly one of poetry. Glenn Ward Dresbach says, "Chicago became the poetry capital of America, and perhaps the world, when Harriet Monroe started *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, in 1912—when poets were having a very dull time." Miss Monroe's magazine not only gave a start to Illinois poets Carl Sandburg and Vachel Lindsay, but also introduced to American readers such other poets as Joyce Kilmer, the imagists, Tagore, Robert Frost, and Rupert Brooke.

During this second Golden Age from 1912 on, Chicago streets knew poets Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay, Harriet Monroe, Lew Sarett, Edgar Lee Masters, and a large coterie of lesser poets attracted by Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* magazine and Margaret Anderson's *The Little Review*. There was Ring Lardner, whose short stories have been gaining steadily in critical acclaim since his death; your boys will be interested in reading Lardner's humorous baseball stories in *You Know Me Al*; they will be interested also in knowing that John Lardner, the present sports editor of *News-week* magazine, is Ring Lardner's son. Other authors, from Illinois or elsewhere, who made Chicago their headquarters in the teens, were Ben Hecht, Sherwood Anderson, Floyd Dell, Francis Hackett, and Vincent Starrett.

How did these writers feel about Chicago? Usually they found a little to admire, much to deplore, much to hope for. Carl Sandburg's "Chicago" set a tone that others tended to follow. Edgar Lee Masters, native of a small town, watched the pedestrians:

. . . restlessly beneath
This man-created mountain chain,
Like the flow of a prairie river
Endlessly by day and night, forever
Along the boulevards pedestrians stream

In a shuffle like dancers to a low refrain:
Forever by day and night
Pursuing as of old the lure of delight
And the ghosts of pleasure or pain.

Harriet Monroe, in her poem "Night in State Street," wrote:

We crowd and creep,
We jostle and push out of our halls and hives,
We chatter and laugh and weep.
Ah, do you hear
The choral of voices, each the secret hiding?
Do you see the warren of souls, each one abiding
In separate solitude, remote, austere?

Here in the glare of the street we cling together
Against the warning darkness, the still height
Of the awful night.
We blow like a feather
From hope to hope along the winds of fate
Importunate.
The lettered lights that twinkle in and out
Lure us and laugh at us, beckon and flout,
Flashing their slangy symbols in our eyes,
Blurting their gaudy lies.

By 1926, H. L. Mencken, who previously had lauded Chicago as a literary center, saw fit to publish in his *American Mercury* an article called "Chicago: An Obituary." The author said that by that time Chicago had become, "esthetically and creatively, a cactus desert." Perhaps so. But then, or in the years since then, Chicago and the Chicago area have been associated either part or all the time with John Gunther, who has been inside everywhere; John Dos Passos, an influential novelist; Edna Ferber, who has gone to and from Chicago like a pendulum; James T. Farrell, who first gained fame with *Studs* Lonigan; Elizabeth Madox Roberts; Glenway Wescott; Yvor Winters; McKinley Kantor; and Oak Park's Ernest Hemingway, whom many consider the greatest living novelist, and whose *Old Man and the Sea* may well become a school classic.

I might have included Hemingway when I was making the point that authors aren't sissies. In high school he was a good boxer and football player. He volunteered for an ambulance unit

in World War I, then enlisted in the Italian army and was seriously wounded; he still wears a silver plate in his shoulder. He was given two of the highest Italian medals for bravery. A story, possibly fictitious, has it that Hemingway was once watching a middleweight championship fight in Paris. He became enraged by the foul blows that the champion was throwing, leaped into the ring, and knocked the champion out. True or not, the story is in the Hemingway tradition—the tradition of a man's man.

Illinois authors, whether writing of the country, the small town, or the city, have never been provincial. Our literature is not the literature of local color. It takes the world view, and many of our authors are truly national or international minded. The poetry of Glencoe's Archibald MacLeish, for instance, is not Illinois poetry—it is world poetry. Humorist Robert Lewis Taylor, a native of Carbondale, whose biography of Winston Churchill is the most readable I have seen, is certainly not provincial. The Van Dorens of Hope and Champaign-Urbana, James Henry Breasted of Rockford, and James Harvey Robinson of Bloomington have written historical and philosophical works that are at the same time strongly literary. The *Personal History* of Pana's James Vincent Sheean is one of the best-known autobiographies of the century, but it is also a keen analysis of world events. Sheean's *Lead Kindly Light* is a superb interpretation of Mahatma Gandhi. Edgar J. Goodspeed, born in Quincy, long a resident of Chicago, is known for his translations of the Old and New Testaments and his numerous Biblical interpretations. No, Illinois authors are not provincial.

I could name many other things about Illinois authors that your students should know. I hope that I have given a few hints about ways of showing your students that authors are people. Perhaps there are places near your community that are associated with authors. John Drury's book, *Old Illinois Houses*, published by the Illinois State Historical Society, pictures and gives information about the William Jennings Bryan birthplace in Salem, the Elbert Hubbard house in Hudson, the Richard Hovey house in Normal, the Icarian apartment house in Nauvoo, the Abraham Lincoln and Vachel Lindsay houses in Springfield, the Edgar Lee Masters house in Petersburg, the Archibald MacLeish house in Glencoe, the Owen Lovejoy and John Bryant houses in Princeton, the Carl Sandburg house in Galesburg, the Jane Addams house in Cedarville, the U. S. Grant home in Galena, the Allan Pinkerton house near Onarga, and the Ernest Hemingway house in Oak Park.

You probably know of other literary landmarks near you. But do your students?

Let me make one thing clear as I conclude. I am not recommending that you teach Illinois authors and forget about those from other states or other countries. Illinois authors are not provincial, and we cannot be provincial in our study of literature. I believe that your students should know that William Cullen Bryant was a bearded author from Massachusetts, but that they should also know that he was a beardless boy, a worried beardless boy, when he wrote "To a Waterfowl." Bryant was a human being. Illinois authors, too, are human beings. They worry. They make mistakes. They are happy sometimes and despondent sometimes. They are born, they are children, they go to school, they fall in love, they fall in love again, they go to war, they marry, they divorce, they eat too much, they drink too much, they go fishing, they have fun, they think a little, they work, they read the newspapers. They share your feelings, my feelings, the feelings of men and women of yesterday and today and tomorrow. They can say with Carl Sandburg,

If I should pass the tomb of Jonah
I would stop there and sit for a while;
Because I was swallowed one time deep in the dark
And came out alive after all.

If I pass the burial spot of Nero
I shall say to the wind, "Well, well!—
I who have fiddled in a world on fire,
I who have done so many stunts not worth the doing.

If authors differ at all from the rest of us, it is that the best of them have a sense of dedication that not everyone shares. They are like the mouse in Vachel Lindsay's poem "The Mouse That Gnawed the Oak-Tree Down":

The mouse that gnawed the oak-tree down
Began his task in early life.
He kept so busy with his teeth
He had no time to take a wife.

He gnawed and gnawed through sun and rain
When the ambitious fit was on,
Then rested in the sawdust till
A month of idleness had gone.

He did not move about to hunt
The coteries of mousie-men.
He was a snail-paced, stupid thing
Until he cared to gnaw again.

The mouse that gnawed the oak-tree down,
When that tough foe was at his feet—
Found in the stump no angel-cake
Nor buttered bread, nor cheese nor meat—

The forest-roof let in the sky.
"This light is worth the work," said he.
"I'll make this ancient swamp more light."
And started on another tree.

BEST POETRY AND PROSE

Once again this year the *Bulletin* will devote one issue to some of the best prose written by Illinois high school students, and another to some of the best poetry. Miss Yates will again select the poetry, and teachers at Jacksonville High School will this year select the prose. Here are the instructions:

1. Any Illinois member of I.A.T.E. is eligible to submit manuscripts.

2. Each teacher should submit no more than five pieces of prose or ten poems. Typed copy is preferred but not essential.

3. The title should be at the top of the first page of each selection. At the bottom of the last page should appear the following information, in exactly this form:

JANET JONES, Exville H. S., '57
Helen Jackson, teacher

4. Preference will be given to writing by students who have not yet graduated from high school.

5. If possible, manuscripts should be submitted before December 20. It may not be possible to give as careful a reading to those received between December 20 and January 10 (the final deadline).

6. Send *prose* manuscripts to Miss Emma Mae Leonhard, Jacksonville High School, Jacksonville, Illinois.

7. Send *poetry* manuscripts to Miss Paulene Yates, 304 Touhy Avenue, Park Ridge, Illinois.

8. Send booklets containing both poetry and prose to both Miss Leonhard and Miss Yates.

9. With each group of manuscripts enclose a statement to this effect: "To the best of my knowledge these selections are original."

10. Postal regulations require that manuscripts be mailed first class. If you wish unused manuscripts returned, a self-addressed envelope with first class postage should be enclosed.